

# SMOKE



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Providence, Rhode Island

Wm. R. Brown Co., Printers  
33 Eddy St., Providence, R. I.

## *Agenda*

Whipped creams and the Blue Danube,  
The lin-lan-lone of Babson,  
And yet the damned thing doesn't come right.

Boston should be in the keys  
Painting the saints among palms.  
Charleston should be New York.

And what a good thing it would be  
If Shasta roared up in Nassau,  
Cooling the sugary air.

Perhaps if the orchestras stood on their heads  
And dancers danced ballets on top of their beds—  
We haven't tried that.

Those early centuries were full  
Of very haphazard people and things,  
The whole of them turning black;

Yet in trees round the College of Heralds,  
No doubt, the well-tuned birds are singing,  
Slowly and sweetly.

WALLACE STEVENS

## *Thousands Of Days*

Morning cried by the bed:  
at Seven, I understood—  
by Eight, I was very God,  
happiness in my head.

At Nine, I went to work,  
and all the machines spoke:  
Quiet there! Don't talk,  
make, break and make!

At Ten, I opened my book  
and all that hour I read  
'The tallest men are dead,  
their graveyard's in your look . . . '

I rose, angered, through sky  
in a plane of glass,  
dreaming speed, I pass  
very bright, very high.

As it went up toward Noon  
I heard the sun scream:  
fly, suck your yellow dream,  
we'll end it soon.

I fell all through One,  
howling and threatening,  
until at Two I sing  
of a far reunion:

On Three the masses spread,  
a fist opening bare,  
a great hand in the square  
to vindicate the dead.

## S M O K E

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By Four the men had gone,  
the land was wet with rain  
and a fountain stood up plain  
on every lawn.

The clock picked at Five,  
those jets turned silver then  
with the lovely words of men  
who wrote and remained alive,

prophesying the night  
of Six, and the dawn behind;  
but, creeping down the wind,  
Seven snatched all the light.

Now am I left alone  
waiting for day—  
sometimes I turn away,  
sometimes I sleep like stone.

Midnight is on my heels,  
death bites about my legs.  
While all my courage sags  
the endless night wheels,

danger yells, and with  
this blackness comes  
back confidence, and blooms  
in song and act and myth.

Call off your black dog, death,  
it cannot bark me down—  
I'll travel past these wounds  
and speak another breath!

MURIEL RUKEYSER

# S M O K E

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## *For The Man On Horseback*

you sit in your fetlocked bravery  
(black-caped)

and the hanging husk of your armor  
god saving the nation

your arm at halfmast  
saluting the ribbon you strung on a staff  
the man of the hour

*(man has only an hour)*

planes scream down the sky on your ears  
and guns on their carts shining with polish  
the rigid flood of men rolling the streets  
let the sun look

and the stars  
and the plush heavens

*(these will be shrouds)*  
and the voice of the hybrid clergy  
and the little white skulls of the shell-mown  
piled at the doors of your palace  
and the jets of blood from the geyser-vents  
in the war-split hearts

these are the fruits  
you will taste on your breakfast plate  
and many-times-fractured skeletons  
will sit on iron settees

and talk with you

your stallion stands with lover's intent  
mated to battle

with the curve of his throat  
arched to the thrust of your jaw  
your heart

# S M O K E

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pumps-up under the load of your medals  
let the world look

and the gods  
*the god*  
and all the less meaty ones

you are the would-be maker of matrix  
for the unit mold of the masses

the brigades  
that throttle the infant voice  
when first it cries for a taste of its fate  
have sprung from your words  
and in the scum of the tainted waters  
with which you have swamped the land  
festers the insect terror

you are the man  
of the hour

*man has only an hour*  
and the faucet that drips off the minutes  
drips dry

yet praises to you sometimes  
for you are a breeder of thinkers

who hate you  
and in the heat of their hate find answers  
your arithmetic never could total  
for the sum

of the whole is the whole  
not you and a horse

LAWRENCE A. HARPER

## *Ode On A Familiar Theme*

I Call back, invocator, to wandered minds,  
arboreal twilights on those blossomed lawns  
where dairy grooms in gross effulgence watch  
the coppered apple on the catalyst bough.

Expunge the russet from that natural gloom  
in which the blandished heart, multiplicate,  
was lost: with clovered grasses now confused:  
the fragrant mowings on the cud-spewed straw.

II —Rara avis, literary rose:  
a marjoram among the lyme-grass strives  
to osculate a downward-thrusting bloom,  
a fervent miracle, but gauchely masqued.

That best-remembered passion to invoke  
which simulated here so lovingly  
a simple heart, complexly lost, is clear  
most in confusion, least in memory.

III A mind that suckled at a paper rose  
bright amethyst decreed, a keener mind  
first to betray the miserecordian fraud:  
now each profusion represents a fear.

And, greatest fear being fear incalculable,  
the fear of God, a faulty logic sees  
precision in obliquity: in fogs  
and shades I see a lusher, longer grass  
than any in the sun, and so commend  
those amorous lawns the twilit lilac fools  
upon, those orchards, aspire in vaguest  
blossoms that could Bray the jackass deaf.

# S M O K E

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## *Anna's Respectful Guidance*

When to sweet music counter drownèd tones  
pictorial excellence no longer weighs.

But blissful vegetables and salad greens  
are bland romantics in such garden shade!

Fey fernery besmiles domestic woodland:  
sainted drollery presumes, where bunnies skip.

Besotted backyard owls growl tenderly  
to yearning carrots underneath the sod.

But Anna, passionless the while, invokes  
her cedar-hearted muse; and stops before

the serried lentils as before bookstalls  
and dreams along a fragrant rue Cascade

as if the sprinklers were a waterfall. Naïve,  
her love enthralls frail pigeons and rosettes.

And mute apostrophes to Rosenthal  
from Anna's psyche drift toward avenues

where trellised quays appear compositely,  
as gay brochures are manifest in dreams.

# S M O K E

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## *Love Poem*

I think ambition keeps you over-long  
at making of what plainly two must be  
a digit one in which a half is me.

In labored twain (so horribly a song  
this arabic annihilation of  
our one-time various uncounted love)

I hear a music that's a visible  
disintegration of the foliate rose;  
and by that explicable fear in which it froze,

thaws out in ribands to the numeral  
irrevocably two, by which I con  
what beds and thresholds we have drowsed upon.

ROBERT TALLMAN

## *Three Panels For A Painted Screen*

- I How great a thing it is to stand  
With the legs firm planted, and the hand  
Tightened about a tree. A young tree  
Tugging in the wind, fighting the selfish land  
About its roots. Seen as I have  
The fire fighters straining to hold back  
Their eager water leaping to despoil,  
So can I feel the power leap inside me,  
And the tree's sharp kiss of wind.  
A fool, admitted, I, for all deride me,  
Air, earth, the water and quintessential element.  
Cherish the natural things, young friend,  
And you are sneered at, taking what all the world  
Can have. Take what the world casts by,  
And you have sinned.
- II Flicker, flicker, new green leaves,  
We have a secret shared, you and I.  
I saw you snare the emasculate sickle moon  
In your curious branches.  
I watched your hurt disgust  
As you flung him to the dust.  
I too have had my ultimate cut from me  
With the blade of ripe advice.
- III Ho! Jewel-spattered moth,  
Making a blur in the air.  
Are the hydrangeas bitter  
now they are mature?

MICHAEL TEMPEST

# S M O K E

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## Poem

Facing the night with bitterness remembered

brown statues of the stone nymphs fallen broken  
in the deserted garden

the honeysuckle dead

No darkness thick with fireflies and moths  
can bring a peace to us forsaken now

Not the flower

the winter stiffened tree  
nor moonlight hot upon the garden wall  
Ours is a birthright won (no music in  
the solitary bird)

only a journey  
toward the single star fired with midnight light  
and a multitude of voices loud with song

No valediction to the moon

the tree  
the pale round eyes within the marble face

but of a singing warm with fields and home  
and winged blood that runs along the bones  
those who speak with heated tongue

revolt  
against the cold and hunger of the years

Songs for these

a world made proud by them  
and the quickened speech of love burned on the mouth

WILLARD MAAS

## *Inertia In A Shaded Garden*

Itching Alma, whose chocolate eyes turn  
treading among us for an erotic peer—

but not with her, but raw fat strawberries,  
served by her, littered on chipped ice  
be rough. Let juice not dissuade you.

Lingual birds chop silence nattily.  
Alma speaks. We under-hear her for the birds.  
She twists, claps hands uproariously in foliage—  
yet birds stay-on on limbs in stubborn stupor,  
coursing fixed-eyes adrift from flapping hands  
to gewgaw wings where frail lice go  
oblivious of the (seldom) sure assault of beaks.

And though we know,  
who knows sharper than herself her dry  
greed needs alleviation by one of us?

Cold berries gone—her eyes turn on—because we shirk.

R. WADE VLIET

## *Window On A Shore*

It is a page, the finger waits, and  
the finger covers what was read. No  
grey light unburdens the evening  
of periphery and shape and gull.

You have not answered, you won't,  
so let the pale shells cover what  
the cats have slain, and all the ants  
dull earth with industry and haste.  
But, little tinted walls across  
the space of open-mouthed waters, soon  
the rains may sidle you unto the shrill  
and sudden cognizance of dreams,  
a marginal of hasty trees that fringe  
on all the parchment melodies  
we emptied once in amber streets.

One light, one shadow of light,  
one man's inaudible haste, one  
voice tilted to say perhaps: only  
the dead enrich the acres, the soil,  
and only the moldered cause the trees  
to bellow into leather leaves. Perhaps  
it was not said, perhaps the mouth was dry,  
the voice unsheathed. But then  
it was night and the cakes we chewed  
were sour and every moment late.

## *Utmost Day*

When once I've burned my feet, shall  
I so answer: sun you stood where  
earth should be. Or say only: feet  
you have stumbled where all wings  
should swirl past clarity and flame?

Then on till every vein is parched  
and all the last reports from earth are cries?  
Or is perhaps the consummation swift,  
and fleeter that one minute could rebuke  
this highest hurt to the defeasible?

This for the old would dry to scars.  
In hasty noons to shrugs: that all  
brief summers perish unto colds, brief  
lights to blacknesses, that all we need to teeth  
our partings on are these our tattered dreams.

Or even till the utmost porters of our thoughts  
announce aside from final shade: these should  
have stayed where henceforth they must lie  
with all their pains undone, akin to their recusant  
father's own sloughed-off satiety of them?

No, this: when pain is no more anger, that  
day to walk aside along the end-detour,  
not blaming sun, not scorning feet; but lonely  
singing to the father of my goal, who ever did  
delay to ripen me against defeat.

DAVID CORNEL DEJONG

## *City Dawn*

Hip switching jitteringly past dawn  
where notes flung themselves  
like hunger-crazed small girls  
upon the pavement . . .  
where the sheen of bitter lights  
mingled with man spit.  
They sang, those last ones of night,  
their voices thin  
shattered by brass . . .  
waves of desire creeping past open windows  
rich with eyes.  
Prying into bundles . . .  
the rustle of silk  
slithering over frail dreams  
and then  
the new sun was blotted out by arms  
brown-taut  
reaching upward . . .  
past clouds . . . past an aeroplane . . . to where  
the last note of the past darkness writhed  
and died of day heat.

ALFRED MORANG

## *Of Charity*

Yet once more before we go into the fire  
And through the fire into darkness and through  
The darkness into nothingness—yet  
Once more let us sing  
Believing in spring and desiring it:  
The many-rainbowed dew upon stone.  
One spot of color knotted in the brain  
May drug the cold ventricular machine  
And let it sleep. Lift the lid of the skull,  
Peer in—this is the region of the mind,  
Vain flesh resenting the imperfect  
Charity of bone.

Now for awhile,  
Feed on neglect of wisdom and forget  
The overripened melancholy thought,  
That grave which tripped us; it is time  
We climbed the mound of skulls and denounced  
Support of death—dung-heap at our feet:  
Dry, powdered dust of breath to fertilize  
One green unending spring.

WINFIELD TOWNLEY SCOTT

## *Sin Sanctity Society & So On*

In the beginning was some word . . .

Wield you the trenchant pen. Wield you that knife  
Which severs silence brooding on desire.  
Pride is the stay that corsets our desires;  
Pride concentrates the hips on single love.  
Go to, my lovely rose, tell her that shines  
So distant and so tinkling on cold wind,  
That you will muse on absolutes confined  
Beneath your hat, that conscious concubines  
Have touched a sensate grandeur in firm loins  
And keep their youth as long and with more use.

. . . All this for Hecuba, while I, gnawing old bones,  
Have no delight to pass away stray time  
Unless to spy my shadow in the sun  
And descant on my own deformity:  
And therefore, since I cannot have this lover,  
I'll fallow in fume sunlight, thrusting fins  
Of pretense while lone ferments abuse

Yes, yes, go far from me,  
Never taste a truth beyond  
All imagery of this grainèd mind.  
To lose a phallus in a glitter rime,  
To quench lust's hollow belly in a dun  
Cloud of reasons pro and con,  
This is the world, O Calyphas.  
This is the world:

To dine with well-bred gestures,  
Fondling a fork with trademark of the school;  
To spend a decent set of hours that one  
May improvise some half-tones on some rule;

## S M O K E

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Sleep with a body old to questing nails,  
Talk of the questions no one can resolve,  
Bite on an answer dangling from nowhere,  
Smile with satiety when some ancient air  
(Of Cimarosa, prithee) exhales *Liebestod*—  
And you, no Celia, maybe, swarm before bold lids  
That twitch and touch your sure oblivion.  
Pride for the nonce. Pride girds the groins  
With seemly (no, not too flagrant) caryatids.

HOWARD BLAKE

## *January Crossing*

This is the narrow summit and the wind;  
the icy footing; the sick drop of air.

They walk a difficult path flanked by space  
which is transparent, horrible and still,  
all with insanity of too clear sight before them  
hollow along the coming years,  
flashing in speech of brother,  
glinting in parent's black insomniac eye  
then gone—  
but always dragging them on  
while they remember the walled sunny love  
that lit their days and the faces of children  
with afternoon gold on March leaves.

These people will die  
like rockets and with arms crossed in the snow.  
Their eyes will blot with sleep;  
their limbs cripple with horror.  
Only those who no longer have to keep  
drug to mask fear of open space will go  
north to exact spring and unmoving star  
where safer footings are.

Between wind and the dreams of body changing to ice  
these people make their scared random explorations.  
Most are past reach of hand. Others keep face  
to rock, a few balance with arms outstretched  
but gusts of sorrow and fury are dragging them all  
always along that pathway which extends  
frozen and white, without intrinsic hope.

CLARK MILLS

WALLACE STEVENS

*Agenda*

is the author of *Harmonium*.

MURIEL RUKEYSER

*Thousands of Days*

who is on the staff of the *New Theatre* will have her first volume  
of poetry published in the Yale Series of Younger Poets this  
November.

LAWRENCE A. HARPER

*For the Man on Horseback*

is editor of *Pollen*.

ROBERT TALLMAN

*Ode on a Familiar Theme, Love Poem,  
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currently writes radio dialogues for The March of Time.

MICHAEL TEMPEST

*Three Panels for a Painted Screen*

of Helena, Montana is eighteen.

WILLARD MAAS

*Poem*

his volume of poems, *Fire Testament*, was recently published by  
the Alcestis Press.

R. WADE VLIET

*Inertia in a Shaded Garden*

has appeared in *Poetry, Space*, and other magazines.

DAVID CORNEL DEJONG

*Window on a Shore, Utmost Day*

is author of *Belly Fulla Straw*.

ALFRED MORANG

*City Dawn*

of Portland, Maine appears frequently in magazines.

WINFIELD TOWNLEY SCOTT

*Of Charity*

recently appeared in the *New Republic's* anthology of eight New  
England poets.

HOWARD BLAKE

*Sin Sanctity Society & so on*

twenty-one years old, has appeared in *Poetry, The American Re-*  
*view, The New Frontier . . .*

CLARK MILLS

*January Crossing*

has appeared in *Dynamo, The Anvil*, and various other magazines.

